THE FRONTIER

A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

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EDITED BY
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OCTOBER 1951
Vol. II No. 10

THE EFFECTS OF LONGER LIVING

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OUR PRODIGAL AGE

•

BARON VON HÜGEL

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THE
FRONTIER
A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

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Monthly Letter

OF the Census taken last April, the Registrar-General promises a provisional report, based upon "sampling", which should provide a reliable account of such social changes as can be detected by enumeration. As early as July, he had issued a preliminary estimate of some of the results, showing that the population of England and Wales continues to grow at about the previous rate, and that this is due to more immigrants than emigrants, as well as to a growing excess of births over deaths. The last development, which means a continuing rise in our average age, is the most humanly significant. It was already inferred from the returns of current registration and has aroused some social and economic speculation. It seems to us that there are also spiritual consequences, which have as yet attracted less attention.

A rise in the average age of the population is an organic development in the life of the people. It is not, like for instance a wave of immigration, an effect of circumstances which may or may not recur, or which others are likely to reverse. Scientific methods applied to sanitation, hygiene and medicine constitute a new way of life that is rapidly spreading all over the world and extending the longevity of all peoples. In countries where such methods are most fully applied, the percentage of citizens over sixty years of

age cannot rise much higher, we are told, without social inconveniences, the most clearly forseeable being the burden this must impose on a proportionately smaller number of younger people. Those in the fully productive period of life have to maintain an excessive number of aged dependents. Great emphasis is laid on this.

Is this a false alarm?

The prospect resembles what was not uncommonly seen in some families in days when the family structure was stronger. Where the parents, and perhaps an aged relative or two, lived well beyond their working days, the burden upon the family often limited the children's freedom, prosperity and ambitions; it could delay their marriages. The less familial, more socialistic community into which we are growing (or drifting) might mask the hardships and resentments of such a situation, but could it avoid them? Social commentators have discussed this outlook with dismay and suggested that, beyond a point, governments would in the general interest have to try to redress the balance; not, of course, by legislation to encourage a rise in the birthrate, for a larger number would be but a temporary solution if they were all to live longer. A learned writer in the *Cambridge Journal* went so far as to suggest, apparently as much in earnest as in jest, a means of fanning the embers of elderly life to make them flare away quicker—namely, duty-free gin and other spirits for any citizens over retiring age! But the truth is that any governmental measure to lower the average expectation of life when we have long taken such pains to raise it would be a fantastic idea, even if it were morally admissable, nor can any certain necessity for it be deduced from the statistics. Economically and otherwise this is a limited problem, not an indefinitely cumulative one. The natural term of man's life is not being lengthened; only more people are being enabled to attain it; more will also be able to work, if less vigorously, to a later age of retirement.

Work and Retirement

The increasing expectation of life is indeed a new social factor, raising important practical questions. For example, if it is true, as has been reported, that the new, increased pension facilities for all are causing people to retire from work at an earlier age than before, it will be necessary either to provide inducements to go on working during their pensionable years, or else to raise the pensionable age. Another attendant problem, upon which work has been going on for some time, is the care of those really past any kind of employment in the service of society; the number of these without children or relatives is increasing, and so is the duration of our now better-tended old age. People often exaggerate, however, the extent to which the family as the natural refuge for the aged has given way. It is still, and always will be, natural for the old to be succoured by their children or other younger relatives, and this is still normally the happiest and best arrangement. To dissuade relatives from too lightly shedding this responsibility (and sometimes driving the old into institutional care against their interests) is a task upon which health visitors and other social workers sometimes spend considerable pains—not only in order to economize scarce hospital accommodation. In many cases they know from experience that the responsibility could best be borne at home, in the interests of the patient, and would be less excessively burdensome than the relatives think. It is quite possible that we shall see before long a reaction in favour of strengthening the family as the social unit, in which case it may reassume more of the care of its aged members. This would not however alter the fact that an older society has to devise new institutions and ways of life to usher its elders out of life in a becoming manner. This will continue to be a field for voluntary as well as professional social service.

Psychological Implications

What psychological effects are to be expected? Many are inclined to suppose that in an older society there must

necessarily be a decline in the spirit of enterprise, an increase of cautious, conservative and inflexible attitudes. But here we need to distinguish between the temperament of a society as a whole, and its various separate institutions. The theme of Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, fantastic as it is, is not devoid of a grain of truth: for experience can only be gained by having it. The acquirement of knowledge takes time, the conduct of modern life presupposes more and more knowledge and calls for better judgement and more sagacity. In these respects, a higher average age-level throughout a society ought surely to improve its mentality and make it a little better able to cope with the altered circumstances of our world. Unfortunately the prospect looks less reassuring as soon as we consider the effects on the various social functions and institutions, including political parties and economic managements. Age will sit more heavily than ever, by sheer weight of numbers, upon every kind of innovation, on every spontaneous adaptation to the unforeseen changes brought about by events. One corrective to this, however, may already exist in the "youth movements" which are a feature of our time. There has been a good deal of silliness in the modern cultus of youth, but this should not blind us to the fact that the provision of organized self-expression for young people as such is a response to social need. The great advantage of youth institutions is that, whilst they can exercise important initiative and influence in many social, political and cultural directions, power within them declines with seniority and is extinguished (or ought to be) at middle age or earlier. There will be a growing need for these junior associations, to balance the probably increasing rigidity of the established institutions, including the Churches.

The Perspective of Death

There is another consequence to be reckoned with, a change in man's sensitivity to the approach of death. Modern man's attitude to death was being modified by his

circumstances long before increasing longevity began to be attested by statistics. In the eighteenth century, to go no further back, parents were devoutly thankful if they succeeded in rearing half their children. There is reason to believe that the death rates were even higher before that, and they have fairly steadily gone down ever since. The world of our forbears was one of a funerary activity we could scarcely bear: children, youths and persons still in their prime were constantly dying in their homes. It was a world of *memento mori*, meditations among the tombs, spiritual preparations for the next life, with almost a cult of highly conscious death-bed farewells. The mortality of our "total" wars and our traffic accidents, formidable as it is, gives us no experience—above all no childhood experience—comparable to that close, constant, familial intimacy with premature death. There was, in consequence, a flavour of the charnel-house in popular preaching and devotion right up to the late nineteenth century, the disappearance of which one need not regret. But neither can one welcome the kind of prudishness about death which has been growing steadily upon us ever since, almost a repression of the very thought of it. As the experience of death has grown rarer in day-to-day experience, people have cushioned their minds against it in every way possible. Compare, for instance, an old-fashioned churchyard funeral, where the solemn silence of the mourners is broken only by the austere words of the burial service, with the ceremony at a crematorium (always characteristically urban, even in the country) where the soft, soulful music of a gramophone pervades a boudoir decency decorated with flowers, where there are no illegible tombstones around, no mud, no open grave to give stark reminder of our return to earth. In the United States the process of repressing the thought of death has gone to such lengths that the accounts given by some English novelists,[1] which

[1] We are thinking of Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* and the description of a cemetery at the beginning of Aldous Huxley s *After Many a Summer*.

some readers take for caricature, are really little if at all exaggerated. But our own urban society is moving in the same direction.

Survival : Individual and Collective

How far is this a spiritual loss ? Of course it is vicious in so far as it is a suppression of truth, an evasion of the reality of our mortal situation. What may seem worse to many religious minds, and is closely connected with it, is a notable decline of thought about any life beyond this life. In the days of *The Christian News-Letter*, its founder-Editor once conducted a good deal of correspondence about the state of Christian belief in the life after death, and one letter especially we remember discussing with him. It was from a devout elderly Christian, doing highly estimable work in the world, who confessed himself unable to feel much interest in his future after death. On consideration, we wondered if the case were unusual : to judge from their conversation, the after-life occupies a diminished place in the imagination of many, if not most, Christians to-day. Resurrection and eternal life are of the essence of the Christian faith : but after all, the way in which the Victorians were concerned about personal survival was very often a mainly man-centred and individualistic interest. " What will happen to *me* when I die, and to my friends and relations ? " is not the question to which the doctrine of the Resurrection is the answer. If contemporary people are to be brought back to the faith, it will not be by trying again to stir up that kind of interest in death and survival. Rather it will be by the need to make sense of the cosmic and historical process and of man's destiny in relation to it, and by finding that in the Bible and in the faith of the early Church it is this, and not the individual's survival, that is the predominant concern. It is so in the prophets, prophesying about the mysterious designs of God, the fate of nations, and the destiny of the chosen people ; and in the Gospel, where there is a wholly new revelation of the Person and

of life through death, this is finally extended to all peoples and put in the context of the restoration of all things. The fate of the modern world requires that we should look at the Gospel in this light. A dazzling success has crowned man's secular strivings for knowledge and power: but it is a success fraught with the menace of unparalleled failure, unless he can resolve the contradictions and bear the huge responsibilities it implies. And he knows that in his own strength, he cannot.

The Debit Side of Success

Is not this the characteristic spiritual crisis of our times—the disillusionment and doubt that attend even our most brilliant successes? Hard-won ability to combat disease and prolong life is one instance of it; in no other direction has scientific progress been more devotedly worked for or followed with more sincere applause—until now, when its success confronts us with the consequent problems, not so much within society, where they cannot be so very unmanageable, but much more on the international plane. For this conquest of disease looks like a biological success for the whole race of man, an indefinite increase in numbers, an over-population of the world, just when civilization is exhausting the resources of food supply and depleting the reserves of material on which that civilization depends. It is the situation described in an article on a later page, based upon the late Michael Roberts' study of *The Estate of Man.* There can be no doubt of the gravity of this problem; we may know too little as yet to make any sure predictions about it, but we know enough to beware of facile attempts to evade the challenge. Given the present unification of the globe (of which, as Sir Miles Thomas said lately, "no place is now more than thirty hours away from any other") the biological supremacy and fecundity of the human race and the present direction of invention—given all this, man was bound to come to a point of frustration. He appears to have triumphed over nature: all material, technical and

intellectual powers have been granted to him and have been used for his own ends, until he has everything but the moon —and is reaching out for that, too. But it is as though every advance had been financed by a new overdraft before the last was paid off, and all his accounts were threatened with foreclosure at the same time. Communism, atomic warfare, world-racial jealousies, all present themselves at once, each one of them apparently sufficient itself to ruin all man's hopes.

"*The Apocalyptic*"

It is when such a crisis is felt in the heart as a moral one that it is rightly called apocalyptic. Then a person sees that the evil is in man himself, in what he is doing, and cannot by his own will cease from doing, for the evil is not only individual but collective. Humanity is confronted by itself. At such a moment, the tragedy is seen as the end-result of innumerable conflicts in individual hearts through ages past, all mis-solved by some sin against the light, by some flight into worldly success. The fear of God against which hearts were hardened comes back as the great terror, as God's "judgement in history". From this there is no collective appeal, for only the individual heart can seek reconciliation with God, in a despair of the world which is also despair of self. Ever since Biblical times began, this apocalyptic element has assumed growing importance. At the death of a man, a nation, a civilization, as at the end of the Bible, it may dominate the scene.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, the world goes on from crisis to crisis, and the Christian is concerned along with everyone else to save human life from the by-products of human successes. There is no way but adaptation to the conditions which have been brought about. If there is anything constant in the Christian contribution to this task, it lies in the perception that adaptation invariably means some renunciation

of a more ambitious aim and acceptance of one that is simpler, more modest. It is therefore usually distasteful, yet never impossible. For instance, our society can perfectly well accommodate a greater number of old people, though to do so may conflict with existing plans designed to raise individual living standards. To cling to previous plans, and deplore a great achievement because it is an inconvenience to them, is mere economic conservatism. The problem outlined in *Our Prodigal Age* may prove far more intractable, depending as it does upon factors outside the control of any one people or government. One merit, we think, of the article we publish, is that the author devotes no more attention to the universal problem than is needed to indicate the situation of this country within it, and to frame some practical directives for policy. For we can think to practical purpose only within the sphere where we have power or authority to prescribe action.

INTERIM

Inter-Church Relations in Britain

The British Conference of Christian Youth which met at Bangor at the end of August has already been too widely and well-reported to call for description here, but is too significant not to be noted. It is the first time that anything of the sort has happened. Youth has taken a hand and brought its qualities of impatience, vigour and spontaneity to the discussion of inter-church relations in this country. There were a thousand delegates in all—800 from home and 200 from oversea churches: leaders of discussion groups were chosen by the delegates themselves and were all under thirty; no senior friends were present after the first sessions unless called in for consultation, and every facility was given for young delegates to raise their own questions. Our own correspondent's report gives us a strong impression that a new factor has entered this field of action.

" Community Conferences "

If there was ever such a bumper year for conferences, both within the kingdom and internationally, we do not remember it. The practice has evidently become indispensable to modern man's social, scientific and general thinking ; it is facilitated by the rapid transport and communication which have also made it necessary by involving us all so much more in each other's affairs. If there is a danger in this, it is that the local community, and those who stay in it, may get overlooked in the excitement of debating vaster issues and the cultivation of far-flung friendships. But there seems to be a movement to correct this. Two incumbents, of parishes not far apart, have experimented successfully with " Community Conferences " held in the Village Hall and recruited almost entirely from the neighbourhood.

* * * *

One of these, at Silver-End, Witham, Essex, comprised a very complete cross-section of the local community. It included such types as the teacher, the student, artist and shop-steward, and representatives of such local interests as party politics, trade union, sports clubs, institutes and the churches. The usual technique was adopted, of discussion groups reporting back to plenary sessions, with some leading addresses by visiting speakers. The topics debated included Home Life, Leisure, Work and Marriage, and a degree of freedom and readiness to converse was attained that was highly encouraging. Admittedly, the achievement was the result of a vast amount of preparatory work and canvassing : but the outcome suggests the possibility of something that might extend elsewhere, with far-reaching effect. In this case, it has inspired a far greater number to join in the preparation of a second Conference on the same lines, on " The Christian within the State ". This is to be held at the Silver End Village Hall on the 6th and 7th of this month ; and will be addressed by, among others, the Rev. Fr. Groser and Mr. George Goyder.

Frontier Luncheons. A Reminder

The next Frontier Luncheon, on Thursday the 18th of this month, is to be held at the Queen Mary Hall, Great Russell Street, W.C. 1, not at the Royal Empire Society as before. Professor H. A. Hodges, who will speak on " Gambling and the Law ", was a member of the last Royal Commission on Gambling. Tickets can be obtained from The Christian Frontier, 8 The Cloisters, Windsor Castle, price 3s. 6d.

OUR PRODIGAL AGE

"*THE whole human race is rumbling on to destruction. There is only a fifty-fifty chance of getting over this food problem.*" That is dramatic language, such as could be justified only by an intense awareness of approaching tragedy on the grand scale. Yet its author was a scientist, Lord Boyd Orr, who, as the first Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, presumably knew his facts. He was, indeed, but epitomizing the warnings uttered during the past dozen years by leading conservationists such as Dr. Hugh Bennett, founder of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Fairfield Osborn and William Vogt of the Conservation Foundation, Jean-Paul Harroy, the French authority on African resources, and G. V. Jacks and R. O. Whyte of our own Imperial Bureau of Soil Science.

That was four years ago. In the interim, the situation has certainly not changed for the better. On the contrary, with the world's human populations increasing by at least 20,000,000 a year (Asian figures are one huge question-mark) and everywhere demanding higher standards of living, with billions of tons of soil being washed or blown off its farmlands every season and natural resources of all kinds being steadily depleted, the rumbling is getting ominously louder. It suggests an express train, overladen with helpless and unsuspecting passengers, heading through the night towards some unknown destination.

How is it that in Britain, the country most vulnerable of all to the effects of progressive world scarcities, so little is being done to set in train the far-reaching economic and social re-adjustments that they must inevitably entail ? There are of course several reasons—none of them flattering to our intelligence—such as the modern creed of perpetual material Progress, a naïve assumption that Science can solve all inconvenient problems, the relatively recent occurrence of "overproduction", and an industrial mentality which has always taken for granted an abundance of cheap primary materials.

But behind these, and presenting the biggest obstacle to their removal, is the sheer physical and psychological remoteness of our great urban populations from the sources of the food on which they live and the materials on which they depend for their cherished " employment ". They simply have not got the personal experiences or contacts which would enable them to perceive the fundamental distinction between power and fertility as factors in production, to grasp the historic significance of the virtual cessation some 20 years ago of the agricultural expansion which alone made industrial expansion possible.

There is in consequence a stultifying tendency, even among otherwise well-informed people, to treat these vitally important issues as a purely polemical affair, which may be interesting to follow but does not directly concern them. Our indomitable, and in many ways admirable, sporting tradition, which places a General Election on much the same footing as the Boat-Race or a Cup Final, leads us to regard all discussion of the food problem as a verbal contest between temperamental pessimists and congenital optimists, between " neo-Malthusians " and those who believe that Malthus' observations were invalidated by the Industrial Revolution.

Unfortunately for this " May the best side win " attitude, the " pessimists " side comprises nearly everyone who can speak with authority and first-hand experience on the two major factors in the matter at issue—the fertility of the world's soils and the fertility of its human inhabitants. The " optimists " side, by contrast, seems to rely chiefly on the opinions (one ought not, perhaps, to say wishful thinking) of those who, however eminent they may be as physical scientists, technologists, economists, engineers, politicians and publicists, have not closely studied the complex biological processes by which food is produced from the soil and ingested by the human body. Often enough, they have never even seen the great food-exporting areas on which so much reliance is placed. The processes about which the controversy centres, moreover, unlike a football match or

even a General Election, are—or soon will be—irreversible. Both soil erosion and population increases are cumulative.

Anything, therefore, which will help to build a bridge of sober realism across this yawning gap between hard facts and human hopefulness, and so lift the issue above debating-society level, is earnestly to be commended. The late Michael Roberts, by reason of his breadth of vision and diversity of talents, was just such a bridge-builder; and it is a tragedy that his premature death occurred while he was still at work on *The Estate of Man*.[1] Grateful as we are to his widow and friends for their devoted efforts to give us the benefit of those chapters and notes which he had already written, it is a thousand pities that he was unable to complete and revise what might have been a monumental work.

It is a grim, almost sardonic, book, crisp and clear in outlook, devastatingly frank in its assessments, as bracing as a cold plunge. The theme falls naturally into four rather unequal parts. The first is a survey of the *re*sources (using the word in its true biological sense) by which mankind is fed, clothed and, to a large extent, housed—soil, crops, livestock, pasture and forests—their extent, present condition and the ever-increasing human demands upon them. The second, a single, comprehensive chapter, similarly and hardly more reassuringly reviews inanimate sources of physical energy—coal, oil, water power, atomic fission and so on—in relation to the vast programmes of industrial expansion in which mankind now reposes so much faith. The third is an equally realistic survey of mankind itself, and the use or misuse it is making of its talents, more especially those essential for the aforementioned programme. The fourth, which emerges from the third, and was uncompleted at the time of the author's death, analyses the psychological trends of the present and future, and the ways in which they are likely to work out socially and politically. The whole, as the *Economist* reviewer pointed out, constitutes

[1] *The Estate of Man.* By Michael Roberts. Faber and Faber. 15s.

" a sombre tract for the times ", none the less effective because it makes no attempt to prescribe painless remedies, though we are given a fair enough idea of what was in the author's mind when he wrote, among his notes for the concluding chapter (" The Estate in Prospect "):

> If the passion for material possessions is not to wreck the world, we must know (at any rate instinctively) what kind of civilization is attainable and is worth having. Is the standard to be quantity or quality? . . . Man's psychological satisfaction essential. . . . We must learn to live in harmony with the earth, as farmers, not miners.

Michael Roberts, as Mrs. Roberts' Foreword tells us, was a mathematician as well as a poet, a philosopher and a teacher; he does not appear to have been at any time a farmer or to have had much contact with the land. He was therefore obliged to rely, for the first portion of the book, upon second-hand assessments and statistical presentation.

In cases such as this, statistical presentation has certain undeniable advantages. It enables an enormous amount of information to be compressed into a relatively few pages; and it is doubtless the most effective—perhaps the only—way in which the terms on which mankind exists can be brought home to that very large section of any urbanized community who have been conditioned by their training and occupations to rely on mathematical valuations. But it also has some grave disadvantages, especially when applied to such subjects as land use, farming, health and nutrition (and, for that matter, human intelligence). For in these fields intangible qualities and imponderable factors are often decisive, and quantitative abstractions may or may not accurately reflect realities. This point is well demonstrated by some of the Tables in the Appendices.

With one notable exception, to be mentioned later, Roberts seems to have selected his sources of information wisely and to have been able to fill out his statistical framework with observations helpful to the layman. There are, however, several minor mis-statements which, while they do not materially affect the general argument, could be misleading

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METHUEN

to the uninformed reader, and are irritating to the informed because they could so easily have been set right by reference to a practical agriculturist.

Such are the distinctions made (p. 14) between rice and the cereals (rice *is* a cereal and an important one), and the remark (p. 15) that the feeding of barley, oats and maize to domestic animals " makes little difference " to the picture of world food supplies ; animal husbandry is probably both necessary and desirable, but undoubtedly more food is obtained by direct human consumption of cereals. Then again, we encounter (p. 22) that time-honoured Aunt Sally of the theoretical economists, the European sugar beet crop, which is cited as an example of " remarkable perversity " without reference to the fact that its stock-feeding and rotational value are at least as important as the sugar extracted from it. The reference (p. 39) to " the store of inorganic matter and mineral salts in the soil " which must be replenished is probably a slip, since desert sand consists exclusively of inorganic matter and the essential difference between it and fertile soil is its lack of humus, which is *organic* matter. So, too, no doubt, is the reference (p. 40) to irrigation in the south-west of Australia (all the big rivers and irrigation schemes are in the south *east*), and the rather surprising statement that soil nitrogen is derived from the breakdown of rock ; contrary to the view expressed on the following page, plants can and do make use of atmospheric nitrogen through the agency of soil organisms, which thus offer a far better and cheaper means of insuring against nitrogen starvation than costly factory processes.

These, however, are minor blemishes by comparison with the series of misconceptions forming the section, " The British Problem " (p. 23). These must be discussed at some length, not by way of censure (since Roberts himself must clearly have been misinformed), but because it is the part of the book likely to be of most direct interest to readers. The first is the implication that all the agricultural producers in Britain, Australia, Canada and several other countries

are wage-earning employees. This is definitely misleading, since by far the greater part of the farm work in the Dominions and in Europe is done by the farmers themselves and their families, and even in Britain nearly half our farms employ no regular wage-labour; were this not so (i.e. if all farm work had to be paid for at trades union rates), the cost of our food would have risen even more steeply than has in fact been the case. There follow *pre-war* figures for the cash value of produce "per worker". These are not only largely irrelevant to the central problem—*food production per acre now and in the future*, but lead up to a serious mis-statement, namely that "the high efficiency of the British farm worker has been due to . . . a willing and skilful use of machinery. . . ." It is no disparagement to our farm workers (who are at least as skilled and conscientious as their industrial counterparts) to point to findings of agricultural economists that lavish mechanization has *not* raised productivity per person engaged in agriculture,[1] while it is, of course, constantly raising the volume of man-power (and materials) *indirectly* required, through the manufacture, fuelling and servicing of the machinery.

Nor is the next paragraph much more helpful, since it asserts without qualification that "Britain, even when feeding badly and striving to extract the largest possible crop from every acre, has never in the last century managed to provide more than 50 per cent of her own food." As recently as 1870, we were predominantly self-supporting, and the subsequent decline has been due almost entirely to the demoralizing effects of cheap imports. During the two World Wars, it is true, there was a good deal of "striving" and a notable increase in production. But since we still have at least 5 million acres of old grassland in need of the plough, while estimates of seriously under-farmed "marginal" land range from 3 to 14 million acres and great

[1] See especially paper read to the Agricultural Economics Society in January, 1950, by F. G. Sturrock (digest in Cambridge University School of Agriculture Memoir 22).

improvements are obviously possible on our 18 million acres of "rough grazings", it seems clear that we are a long, long way from full utilization of "every acre". In fact, the research committee of the Rural Reconstruction Association, after an exhaustive survey of the position, found that (except for margarine) the whole of our 1946 consumption of staple foods could be home-produced, given two conditions. The first is optimum land use on the lines proposed by Dr. Dudley Stamp (which allow for non-agricultural requirements);[1] the second is a 40 per cent increase in average per-acre yields—a figure regularly achieved, and surpassed, by our best-managed holdings.[2]

The conclusion that failure to feed ourselves is a result of national policy rather than of physical limitations is reinforced by the case of our near neighbour Denmark, where, despite poorer soils and a harsher climate than ours, at least twice as much food per acre is produced. What is more, this production was maintained right through the last war, without any imported animal feeding-stuffs or phosphatic fertilizers and little machinery.

This unreal picture of British agriculture, though it seems to have led Roberts to some quite unnecessarily pessimistic conclusions in this case, does however serve one useful purpose. For it shows how unlikely we are ever to solve our *national* food problem so long as agricultural policy is shaped by (*a*) commercial considerations which regard home production as the adjustable factor in a predominantly import-export economy, and (*b*) industrial criteria which regard all labour as a cash cost, and call in addition for ever-increasing expenditure on mechanical and chemical aids. Under such conditions, the determining factor is inevitably the prospective margin of cash profit, which (owing to the short-range economic background and the law of diminish-

[1] See *The Land of Britain* (Longmans 1948), p. 438.

[2] For specific examples, see the nine-year results of the Production Recording Scheme operated by the Hampshire Growmore Clubs.

ing returns) is likely to be greatest at production levels well below maximum.

Roberts suggests that, in the long run, there are only two solutions open to us—a reduction by half of our present population, or an international food policy. The first would be a counsel of despair, even if it were feasible; the only migrants acceptable in large numbers to other countries are the young and adaptable, so that we should be left with a hopelessly unbalanced community. The second sounds well, but must be read in the light of his own observation (p. 25) that " countries which grow their own food will not part with any more of it than they can spare ". As events are showing, they are able (and willing) to spare less and less.

It would be more realistic—and, incidentally, more encouraging—to face the fact that there is just *one* alternative to the present " export drive " with its prospect of selling more and cheaper manufactures in order to buy less and dearer food and materials.

It is a thoroughgoing agrarian policy on Danish (and Dutch) lines, based on small freehold family farms and intensive mixed husbandry—in other words, a planned restoration of peasantry. The Danes themselves have made a few mistakes, and will make another if they allow themselves to be persuaded into swapping good butter for expensive tractors. But their prescription of intensive land use, liberal education, a spirit of co-operation, hard work and thrifty independence—first given them by Bishop Gründvig—has raised them in 80 years from national bankruptcy to one of the highest *average* standards of living and culture in the world. We have not indeed got 80 years to spare; but neither need we wait till we are bankrupt before trying the prescription. What we seem to need most is a Bishop Gründvig!

Such a policy, too, would enable us (if we had the good sense) to reap the advantages of a localized, self-contained food economy in minimizing the loss of nutritive properties in transit and maximizing the return of wastes to the soil for

its re-fertilization. It is rather surprising that Roberts makes no reference to this aspect of the food problem, seeing that he mentions (p. 13) the striking contrast between the thrifty Japanese, who feed 3 persons per acre cultivated, and the extravagant British, who need (if they can get them) 3 acres *per person*, and the still more extravagant Americans.

The conclusion seems inescapable that in proportion as the Anglo-Americans (to borrow a Soviet epithet) have advanced technologically, so have they retrogressed in the arts of husbandry, though the admirable work of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service may be taken as a sign of grace. How far are their schemes for world uplift through the industrialization of " underdeveloped " countries—such as the Truman Fourth Point programme and the Colombo Plan—likely to be effective in countering Communist propaganda and averting the threatened Asian and African demand for a more equal distribution of land and food? As the recent Groundnut Scheme should have taught us, such projects are ill-adapted to the production of more food, though they unquestionably increase the local demand for it. To what extent, asks Michael Roberts, are the Anglo-Americans going to be willing to reduce their own living standards in order to help feed the babies of countries like India and China which already have far too many?

He advances, moreover, two further considerations. The first, to which he devotes the chapter on " Sources of Energy ", is that all mechanized industry depends on cheap and abundant power, not only for its operation, but for its capital construction. Power plants themselves must absorb much applied energy before they can be brought into use, such projects as hydro-electricity, the harnessing of tides and atomic fission being outstanding in this respect. Here we cannot do better than quote two extracts from the chapter itself:

> The world has enough oil to last for twenty-two years, enough coal to last five hundred, and enough damsilliness to last for ever. The development of the petroleum industry, with the virtual

exhaustion of the world's supply practically within a single lifetime, is likely to become one of the curiosities of history.

If our aim was to raise the whole world to the present level of the United States, we would need a total daily output of mechanical and electrical work of 35,000 million kwh. By harnessing all the world's available waterpower, we could obtain 9,000 million kwh. per day. Petroleum, as we have seen, is a wasting asset, but for the present we could rely on 3,500 million barrels a year, which would provide another 1,700 million kwh. per day. The remaining 24,250 million kwh. per day would have to be provided by coal, and this would need 15 million tons of coal a day, or 5,500 million tons a year, which is more than three times the world's present output. . . . It should be noted that the standard set is not really a high one : there is a good deal of poverty even in the U.S.A.

The second consideration Roberts advances is the supply of trained manpower of sufficient intelligence and character for the many and often highly responsible posts that our ambitious planning entails. His faith in existing I.Q. tests as a measure of such qualities in children is not easy to share fully, since such tests seem to put a premium on mental slickness and early maturity at the expense of depth and staying-power. (One is reminded of the young backwoods realist who, when asked how many cows he would take home if he took out ten to graze and lost two, promptly retorted : " We ain't got but six cows—an' if I lost two I wouldn't dare go home anyway ! ") But there is no denying the force of the argument that these qualities are gradually being bred out by the penal taxation of middle-class potential parents to provide subsidies for the less intelligent. There is also the alarming (and probably increasing) disparity in reproduction rates between communities of predominantly North European stock, and the Asian and African races—not to mention those now comprised by the U.S.S.R. It almost looks as if the white man has been digging his own grave with his own medical skills, by applying them positively to prolific coloured peoples and negatively (through contraceptives) to his own. That may be an uncharitable as well as an uncomfortable thought, but it sticks !

Would that space permitted an adequate appreciation of the grimly fascinating chapters entitled " How Much Will Our Nerves Stand ? " and " The Struggle for Power ", in which the author gives more rein to his natural philosophical bent and examines with unusual insight the creeping neurosis of modern civilization and the ways in which it is exploited by ambitious power-politicians. He maintains that though " fear of hunger may be a cause of war, hunger itself is not," a nation at or below subsistence level having no margin to spare for war-like preparations. But he concedes the possibility of industrialized nations accumulating sufficient coal, steel, petrol and food to make a lightning food- or land-grabbing raid look very tempting. Recent events hardly encourage us to dismiss this possibility as an unthinkable reversion to barbarism.

Roberts himself seldom moralizes ; his restraint in this respect is admirable. But the morals are there for readers to formulate for themselves. One of the more obvious is that, because of our unlimited faith in the ability of human ingenuity to defy nature, we have been—and still are—trying to do too much too quickly. One could wish that the remedies (other than the Four Horsemen) were as obvious. One constructive step might, however, be taken with relative ease and painlessness, and that is a careful and unprejudiced examination of the evidence now being accumulated by such bodies as the Soil Association that the increasing susceptibility of our physical and nervous systems is due, not only to the strains of urban life, but to the progressive deterioration of the soils that feed us and the manipulative processes to which our food is subjected on its long journey to our plates.

Better husbandry of the estate with which we have been endowed might well lead to better husbandry of our own bodily, mental and spiritual resources. Man, it is true, " liveth not by bread alone ". But it is possible, as the Council for the Church and Countryside pointed out some years ago, " to foster a new awareness of religion through

the life of husbandry, in which man learns in a quite distinctive manner his dependence upon nature, and upon co-operation with his fellow-creatures "—an axiom with which Michael Roberts, one feels, would have been much in sympathy.

JORIAN JENKS.

BARON VON HÜGEL

BARON FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL would have recognized in the work of *The Frontier* purposes and activities akin to his own. One of his outstanding characteristics was his capacity for making friends with an extraordinary assortment of people whose views and experiences differed greatly from his but who, in their own sphere of life and thought, exercised influence and leadership. His own faith and churchmanship were strong and clear. He was, and remained throughout, a Roman Catholic, and his close contact with men of other churches and other faiths was based, not on doubt about his own beliefs, but on the conviction that spiritual health resides also in tension at the frontiers of one's faith with that of others. It is for this reason that there are few Christians who knew von Hügel who did not feel he belonged to them and his works and words are treasured by them all. It was in virtue of the strength with which he held his own position that he could seek to foster Anglican-Roman Catholic conversations and, further, that he thought it worth while for men of all religious faiths to meet. These conversations did not achieve the results many sought through them and they are, perhaps, no longer well remembered. This cannot be said for his work with " Modernists ". There is a contemporary ring in the " Modernist " controversies in which he took a leading part in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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The new life of Baron von Hügel, by Michael de la Bedoyère[1] devotes a great deal of space to this aspect of his work. It makes both exciting and profitable reading.

Whoever invented the word " Modernism " did no little disservice to the habits of thought and feeling they sought to commend. Perhaps it was invented by an enemy of scientific method. What it seeks to convey is not something perpetually new and up-to-date, not an intellectual fashion devised by a philosophically minded Dior, but the use of methods characteristic of scientific pursuits in all matters where their use is relevant.

The method includes bringing patterns of thought to the test of data and checking data by patterns of thought. This procedure has produced striking results in physical science and clearly has also a place in the study of history, not least in the study of the historical basis and development of the Christian Church. It presupposes that there is a design in what is being examined, a design which is not self-evident but which has to be recognized first by making an assumption about what it is and then checking the assumption by a close observation of the facts.

The ultimate design is probably for ever a mystery and this is a limitation which scientists recognize when stating hypotheses—the hypothesis is seeing the design " through a glass darkly ". These hypotheses are checked by facts and by forecasting. But the facts themselves are not objective facts. They are a relationship between objective facts and the scientist. Further the formulation of hypotheses, and the checking of them, involve a deliberate choice, a selection of some relationships, those in which the scientist is involved, as significant, and a neglect of others as unimportant, even if this neglect is purely temporary. At every stage the scientist is consciously involved in an activity which defines and limits the validity of his work. There is, however, no doubt about the effectiveness and worth of what he is doing.

[1] *The Life of Baron von Hügel*, by Michael de la Bedoyère. Dent 25s.

The use of this method, with a recognition of its plain limitations, was one of the main preoccupations of Baron von Hügel. He felt strongly its potency in the study of the texts of the Old and New Testaments and staunchly and self-sacrificingly urged that, by these means, the scriptural foundation of Christianity could be made firmer and the understanding of its meaning enriched and purified. He was far from making the assumption that the Bible was the only basis on which the Church and Faith rested. He did not neglect the tradition and experience of the Church itself, but his efforts, and his encouragement of the efforts of others were directed to a purification of the understanding, and an opening-up of new channels in men's minds for the Holy Spirit of God, through a reverent use of the scientific disciplines of his age. He believed that the world which was being opened up by physicists, astronomers, biologists and geologists was God's world and that their new means of exploring it were gifts from God. These newly powerful revelations, both in substance and in method, should be welcomed by the Church, used in examining history, and taken into her tradition.

But Baron von Hügel was not merely an advocate of scientific method. His outstanding support for those who used it was given within a far richer understanding and sensitivity than characterized most of his fellow fighters, and it is this which gives him his real stature as a giant in the world of religious philosophy and experience. Most men become the slaves of the good things they laboriously discern. They elevate their glimpse of truth to the rank of absolute and exclusive truth and what begins as the glory of God shining dimly in their minds and hearts becomes a savage devil lashing out at everything which is not itself. None saw this, in the context of his day, more clearly than Baron von Hügel, and his struggles within himself and with Loisy and Father Tyrrell derive from this perception. He was quite clear that within the range of his scholarship Loisy was right and he was equally sure that Father Tyrrell's

Pilgrim's Progress was an essential element in religious life. He wished however to hold these good things within a larger whole, and found it vital to maintain the tension between them and the past experience and present frailties of the Church.

To von Hügel there are three elements in any religion which is free and living; the mystical, the direct leaping across "disciplining facts and laws" whereby the human personality is linked to God in the authentic act of religion; the intellectual, within which scholasticism and science have their place; and the institutional, the ecclesiastical organism whereby the whole is mediated to the world and to the future. Religious life is a strain and tension between a dim apprehension of God, a partial and uncertain knowledge intellectually acquired and tested, and the maintenance of the institution run by imperfect and prejudiced, stubborn and sinful men to pass on the fact and truth of God. "No cross; no crown" was clearly von Hügel's insight and much of his time and energy was given to ensuring the maintenance of these stresses within an unsympathetic Roman Church. Whilst it was clear to him that Modernism had much to give the Church it was also clear that the Church—conservative, scholastic, and difficult as were its leaders—had a great deal more that was necessary to the Modernist. He viewed with distress Loisy's trend towards ethical humanism and Tyrrell's reaching out to Anglicanism, mainly because of his deep sense of the need to maintain tension within the Church rather than seek to correct the Church by an act of schism.

This aspect of von Hügel's life and work, summed up as it was in his *Mystical Element of Religion*, is described in Michael de la Bedoyère's *Life*, with a fullness and detail that offer much food for reflection. Here is a careful examination of the tension between mystical experience, intellectual apprehension, and institutional reactions within the life of the Baron and his friends, showing in their history the fruits and consequences of widely different responses to the strain;

the Baron all the time seeking to ensure the conditions under which no relaxation is granted, whilst some of his friends relieve the strain by withdrawing from the reach of institutional authority, others by seeking to defy it, and others by mere submission. Each element in this full religious life is capable of taking on a separate existence, of producing a different cancer on the body of the Church. The mystical element alone can produce spiritual separateness and religious pride; scholasticism and science alone can lead to ever new forms of the Gnostic heresy; institutionalism produces a love of power which grows in an atmosphere of emotion-evoking ritual. Held together within the same Church they result in vigorous humility, and Church and people experience the wonderful workings of the Holy Spirit.

This aspect of the book is perhaps the one which renders its appearance at this present moment a valuable service. We are again witnessing a change in the world of science, a fresh examination by scientists themselves of their own activity and its essential meaning and the status of its findings. The whole working model of eighteenth and nineteenth-century science is seen to be at fault; concepts like "cause and effect", simultaneity, matter, energy, time, are under revolutionary scrutiny: chance and uncertainty have entered the language of science with a new vigour. These things are happening at the same time as an extension of the method of science into human social relationships. Taken together they cannot but have a considerable significance for the philosophy of religion, though what this will be is not yet clear. What is apparent is that a fresh move forward in science waits upon metaphysics and this cannot be a matter of indifference to theologians, be they "mystics", "intellectuals", or "ecclesiastics", any more than they can ignore the posthumous manifestation of nineteenth-century scientific materialism—namely, Communism. A glance back at von Hügel will show us how the earlier but similar crisis was met or avoided, and an examination of his experi-

ences and works may at least save us from old blunders and at best guide us into fruitful struggles.

Although much of the *Life* is given to these Modernist matters, that is not the whole von Hügel. Here is certainly von Hügel making history, but there is also the intimate, friendly, humble, spiritual counsellor. As Dr. Russell Maltby once said to me after a long discussion of the writings of the Baron ". . . and yet all this is clear to my washer-woman". Von Hügel was very sensitive to this fact and he never lost his "common sense" and the experience of learning from humble, simple and faithful people. His counsel always bears this mark. "So glad you don't strain," he wrote to his wife. "Never strain: if you fell into mortal sin, if you were dying, never strain." There is also something of this in the story he told his audience at St. Andrew's, of an American who was advised by the Unitarian, James Martineau, to compare the lives of simple Westphalian peasants and those of cultured emancipated Germans. On his return the American confessed, "When face to face with those grim realities of life, those clumsy, 'superstitious', narrow Polish peasants possessed a depth of insight, an assurance of action, an at-homeness of conviction, of a magnificent swiftness, purity, and massiveness. And when face to face with these same realities, the nimble 'enlightened' materialist students were utterly helpless, without insight, action, conviction of any kind." The same simplicity, and respect for simple things comes out in his reflections on a cow in a field—if the cow spent its time stamping on the thistles it cannot eat it would die in the midst of the plentiful grass which it can eat: it simply walks round the thistles, eats the grass and lives. He is fully sensitive to the fact that what he, the scholar, laboriously analyses is often the sound and clear judgement of simple folk. His humility is the key to his helpfulness and to his intellectual and spiritual stature.

There is much in this book which seems to indicate that the author, like the Baron, had his eye on the Vatican as he

wrote. This in no way detracts from its charm for those who already know von Hügel nor from its value as an introduction for those who have not yet met him.

EDWIN BARKER.

RELIGION AND RESEARCH

MOST of my working week is spent in the company of people who believe in what is called "opinion and market research": who believe, in other words, that if the public with which they have to deal behaves in a way that cannot be fully understood, then the reasons for such behaviour can best be found by asking some of this public to talk about themselves. Many problems in this field are of course commercial (why is X's toilet soap now selling less than Y's? what will happen if goods now selling at 1s. 0d. are raised in price to 1s. 6d.?) but they are by no means limited in this way. To take but one example, the Government uses social survey to throw light on problems that range from the amount of betting undertaken in this country to the number of people who know the names of the colonies.

Constant contact with this type of research (in the value of which I firmly believe) makes me wonder at the little use that is made of it by the churches. Although a number of surveys on religious life (on why people do not go to church, on what they think of the church, and so on) have been made, few if any have been sponsored by anybody more closely allied to the Christian churches than the board of a religious newspaper. And practically no "spontaneous" research has been carried out by the churches despite the singular advantages that they have for undertaking this sort of work. It is normally a fairly slow process—and consequently a fairly costly one—to get the opinions of a cross-section of men and women. But such costs are almost

entirely labour costs, and the churches have a pool of voluntary labour which must be the envy of opinion research workers everywhere!

Many churches already have district visiting schemes whereby regular members of the congregation visit other parishioners. Such people are making the same contacts that a research investigator would make. The only real difference lies in the method of approach, and the extent to which the calls, and the results of the calls, are systematized.

Opinion research is something that most people think they know all about. In fact, all they usually know is that it exists. There are a great many, not very obvious, snags in the work. One often reads in the papers "I have conducted my own Gallup Poll, and I have found that . . .", the conclusions that have been reached almost invariably supporting the writer's own pet theory. Usually such "polls" are worse than useless, being based on badly worded questions put to badly chosen people.

The two most important factors to be considered in any form of opinion research are, first, "Am I asking the right people?", and second, "Am I asking the right questions?".

This is not the place to discuss in detail the *size* of sample (i.e. the number of people interviewed) except to sound a general warning against drawing too wide conclusions from too little evidence. But it is always important to consider any problem within its own context, to decide before starting what sort of people are to be concerned in the research. It is not much use, for example, deducing from interviews carried out in the street how many people are not feeling well at any given time, for most of those who are ill will be at home in bed and are not available for interview. Similarly if the purpose of a piece of research is to find out what type of sermon is valued by those who come to church regularly, then an announcement from the pulpit and a questionnaire in the pews is perfectly adequate. But if the purpose is to find out what sort of sermon is most liked by those who only come to church *occasionally*, then obviously

only a small proportion of such people will be in the congregation to hear any announcement ; they would have to be visited at their homes, preferably from lists specially prepared for the purpose.

All churches have a two-fold obligation, to their regular attenders and, evangelically, to the rest of the neighbourhood. Inevitably these purposes get mixed up. But any attempt to assess by opinion research the impact of the church as a whole or the impact of any individual part of a church's work, must first decide whose opinion is required. It is not important, for example, to know that a " recruiting " sermon was a great success with members of the church council, though it oftens seems to be regarded as relevant.

The right questions are just as important as the right people. Very often questions can be entirely misleading because they mean one thing to the person who makes up the questionnaire, quite another to the person who answers it. Apparently innocent questions can also have dangerous " leads " in them if they put ideas into people's heads that have never been there before. It would obviously be a leading question to say, " You would go to church more often if you were taken from door to door by car, wouldn't you ? " : but there would still be a lead if the idea of free transport—brand new to most people—were expressed in any form that did not include adequate safeguards.

There are dangers in the questionnaire taken as a whole as well as in individual questions. It is rumoured, for instance, that it is useless to ask questions about betting and churchgoing in the same questionnaire. People who have admitted going to church underplay their betting activities, or, if the order of the questionnaire is reversed, those who admit to betting will not always say that they go to church !

Another difficulty lies not in getting the question right but in recording the answer. However clearly the question is put, some people are sure to talk round it and add a lot of irrelevancies. There is of course a great deal to be said

for recording all such comments, and the organization with which I work has always emphasized the value of the qualitative approach and the " verbatim interview ". But there is little doubt that when interviews are to be made by those to whom interviewing is not a full-time paid job, the type of question that is (or, rather, should be) answered by a simple " Yes " or " No " is less likely to create wrong impressions.

Provided that these points are borne in mind, there seems no reason why churches should not find out with comparatively little effort a great deal more than they know now about their own local impact, and about the ways in which their witness could be improved.

Many clergy will doubtless say that they know all the answers already. This may be true ; in market research it is sometimes simpler not to go to the final users of a product but to the shopkeepers who sell it and may be assumed to know a good deal about their customers. Similarly it may well be possible for " church research " to concentrate on the clergy's own knowledge of their parishes.

There is also danger in this approach, however. Everybody's beliefs are coloured by what they *want* to believe, and a clergyman probably has less opportunity than those in most other professions of finding out what others think of him, and how well he is doing his job. Laymen too within the church often project their own beliefs on to non-churchgoers, and assume that their own interests are also those of others. Many church notice boards (that invite the passers-by to recitals of sacred music, for example, or to Mr. Blank discussing the book of Isaiah) seem to imply that a non-churchgoer *ought* to have such interests, and is not worth attracting if he has not.

It is this gap between the *attitude* of the church member and the *attitude* of the non-churchgoer that opinion research would seem most easily to bridge. All of us who believe in the faith tend to find it difficult to imagine that those without it can still be satisfied with their own ideas. In

rather the same way—though the analogy is by no means a complete one—a shoe manufacturer may find it difficult to understand why people buy another maker's shoes when laboratory tests have shown that his own are better in every way. The manufacturer calls in market research, which through its investigators, is able to go direct to the non-buyer. Results of this approach may show that many people believe that there is a certain flaw in his shoes: and whether this is the case or not, as long as they believe it they will not buy. Until he knows the reasons for non-buying (true and false) the manufacturer can only employ hit-and-miss methods to increase his sales.

Reasons put forward by non-churchgoers for their absence from church may be such that nothing can immediately be done about them (if, for instance, their objections were to the whole doctrine of original sin). But there would surely be many more reasons on which the clergy and the church could act—points which would probably not have been thought of by those whose ideas of the church are conceived from within it.

This type of research may be a little rough and ready but would serve perfectly adequately on a parish basis: it would be much more open to question on a larger scale. All the same it does seem possible that such a system could be expanded. Could not the same sort of questions be asked in a number of parishes, and the results co-ordinated to present a diocesan, or even a national, picture? That is one of the processes used in commercial research.

Technical difficulties would of course increase. The statistical framework of the survey, and the wording of the questions, would have to be studied by somebody who had at least a working knowledge of this type of research. But the number of such people is steadily growing, and the great bulk of the work could still be undertaken by "unskilled" labour.

Problems to be considered on a national scale would not be quite the same as on a parish one. The effect of a Sunday evening service on the local common would have to be

replaced by a study of the whole impact of open-air evangelism. At the same time many wide problems could be studied that could not be dealt with at all on a parish level. Where in England, for example, are the pockets of resistance and the centres of enthusiasm? Do the same evangelical techniques create the same reaction in South Wales as in Northumberland?

So far the only subjects considered here have been those specifically relating to evangelism and church administration. Clearly the sociologist will be interested in a great many other problems related to Christian belief. What, for instance, is the connection between such belief and attitude to economic and political affairs? What is the impact of the clergy on the life of this country, and what part does the church as a whole play in influencing opinion? And how, in such matters, do Roman Catholics differ from Presbyterians, and Quakers from Anglicans?

There is, by the way, little difficulty in talking to people about religion. The constant experience of researchers in almost all fields is that people like being asked questions, and appreciate it when manufacturers and organizations show belief that the common man's opinion still matters. There is no doubt too that people like talking about religion—many of the investigators in my own organization regard a religious questionnaire as something of a rest cure after some commercial subjects!—provided that it is stressed that co-operation will not result in too constant "pestering" to take part in all sorts of church activities.

One of the most successful ways of selling market research to the doubter is to cite him chapter and verse of how it has helped some other manufacturer in the same field. But although some use of the opinion research technique has been made with practical results in the United States, I know in this country of no surveys which have *directly* helped to bring more people to church. Those that have been carried out have concentrated largely on presenting background facts on numbers of churchgoers, on attitudes

towards God, or feelings towards the clergy. On the other hand, there are a great many examples in other fields of *local* research succeeding : of department stores, for instance, which have paid for surveys within six months out of the increased profits of a single department in which a research report had suggested alterations ; of public utilities, which have increased their service and efficiency as a result of a direct approach to their users (and, more important, their non-users) ; of local papers, which have greatly added to their readership by ascertaining reader opinion.

The church's purpose is not the same, of course. But if advertisement is accepted as a worthwhile method of spreading the gospel, why not the commercial complement to advertisement ; research into its impact and its market ? All religious broadcasts, incidentally, are already subjected to the same intensive opinion research that is constantly carried out on all B.B.C. programmes.

The surveys on religion that have been made[1] in post-war Britain are, as already mentioned, mainly background surveys providing a general rather than a detailed picture. But to judge by the amount that they are quoted, they nevertheless serve a very useful purpose to many connected with the work of spreading the church's work.

It would naturally be essential to publish as much as possible of all " church research ", preferably through a special bulletin with the widest possible circulation. One such admirable Bulletin already exists in America, the Information Service of the Research and Survey Department

[1] Among the most important are (in date order) :—

Puzzled People, by Mass-Observation. Victor Gollancz.

Churchgoing in Britain (published in *News Review*, 23.10.47, 30.10.47, and 6.11.47.)

Contemporary Churchgoing, by Mass-Observation (originally published in the *British Weekly*, now available from Mass-Observation as a pamphlet).

English Life and Leisure, by B. Seebohm Rowntree. Longmans (certain chapters only).

of the U.S.A. National Council of the Churches of Christ. Perhaps inevitably, much vital information about the habits and opinions of the British people lies mouldering in the files of various manufacturers who have had confidential reports prepared for them. But church research should never be confidential, for every member of the church as a potential evangelist should have as much information as possible about his task, and, particularly, about the ideas, beliefs, and attitudes of the people he must approach.

However much this amateur research is used, there will, I think, still be a demand for the professional as well. None of the approaches suggested in this article could, even with extremely careful supervision, provide the sort of reply that is sometimes required of the social research worker when he is asked to predict how many people will buy a product, or who will win an election, to a degree of accuracy greater than that which can be obtained by any other method. It will not be possible, from results obtained from a volunteer investigator force, to say, for example, that 61 per cent hold Opinion X and 23 per cent Opinion Y. But it should be possible—and this is the main purpose of these proposals —to provide evidence that Opinion X is held by at least twice as many people as hold Opinion Y. "Amateur" research could broadly divide group habits and opinions, the "professional" could, when necessary, pin-point them. But even without this pin-pointing, many dangerous fallacies now widely held would at least be made more difficult to hold, many new experiments could be based on fact rather than on hunch. To-day, even many basic statistics such as "average congregations" seem very often to have added wishful thinking to hard counting.

We already know from the use of research techniques that at the most one quarter of the population of this country is at the moment in any real contact with the churches. Surely research, as well as every other means, should be used to reach the remaining three in four?

LEONARD ENGLAND.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Dear Sirs,

In his letter in the September issue Mr. Munby suggests th I may have misled some readers by too easily accepting that our cit have got to be rebuilt in flats, as distinct from houses.

I am grateful to him for raising this, and if the words I used we too pessimistic I regret it. I am as keen as he is that residential r development within the great cities shall not consist entirely of bloc of flats, and that larger numbers of houses shall be intermingled wi them than has been the case in recent years. Nine-tenths of t dwellings put up in the County of London since the war by the loc authorities have been flats.

Like him, I consider that this is partly due to the present system Exchequer subsidies being more favourable to flats than to house under urban conditions. Like him, I regret the disappointing slo ness of the growth of the New Towns. But his letter seems to n not to bring out fully enough the main factor (apart from subsi considerations) which influences the minds of the members of Housing Committee in a large city. Constantly looming in front them they have an immense waiting list of urgent applicants f accommodation, and only a very limited amount of land within the area on which they can build. They cannot afford to sacrifice hig density to amenity, at any rate until such time as they begin to s their waiting list being reduced by outward emigration, to the Ne Towns or the "expanded towns" or elsewhere. They find th situation radically altered for them by the post-war restriction o private enterprise building, whose new estates, growing up outsi the great cities were, before the war, continuously drawing off pa of the population to more salubrious environments. Local authoriti have since the war been struggling with their own waiting lists unaide

As time goes on, I hope that the process of emigration is going speed up again, and also that Housing Committees, awakening to wh is happening, will start to give serious thought to practical ways including more houses along with flats while still attaining reasonab high densities. But in my judgment it would be unrealistic to assum that when sites become vacant for residential building within th built-up areas of great cities, there is likely to be large-scale buildin of houses on them, and not flats.

Yours faithfully,

HENRY BROOKE.

REVIEWS

South India Diary. By J. E. Lesslie Newbigin. S.C.M. Press. 7s. 6d.

The Bishop in Madhurai and Ramnad (a former Scots Presbyterian, now set over a Diocese of mainly S.P.G. and American Congregationalist origins) has by request written up his journal letters to friends. The result is a lightly written and profoundly stimulating book, which describes the way in which the Church of South India (whose genesis is sketched in a foreword) is, in the process of growing together, also being reformed by the Gospel. The reviewer is enviously conscious that in South India, Bishop, clergy, and laity alike seem to have, and to be taking, a chance to discover the meaning of Catholic Christianity which has not come his way in England (or for that matter, in China). The book should be required reading alike for those who are suspicious of "South India" and also for its theologically frivolous admirers who may be somewhat shocked). It will also illuminate the "primitive Catholic bishop" which we read, write, and talk about, but are not often able to discern in the C. of E. Bishop Newbigin is an exceptionally talented person; but what matters—and what comes out here—is not his personality but the sort of job being a bishop in the Church of South India is, the way it is conceived, and the relation he has to the presbyter and the layman. In these matters, one reader at least feels that some things that he has previously encountered only as theological ideals have now been, imperfectly no doubt, actually realized.

DAVID M. PATON.

The Household of Faith: An Essay on the Changing Pattern of the Church's Life. By T. RALPH MORTON. The Iona Community. 6s. 6d.

The central section of this stimulating and easily understood little book which has come out of the experience of the Iona Community and also the author's experience as a missionary in Manchuria) is a rapid sketch of the successive ways in which the new life which is in Christ has been creatively incarnated in society: the "rival civilization of the proletariat" of the Early Church; the monastic response to barbarian chaos; the Christendom which emerged from it as con-

ditions became more settled (together with an interesting note on the failure of the Franciscan movement to achieve a new expression of Christian love in social terms); the Christian family of the Reformation; and the Christian congregation of the Industrial Age with its range of missionary work and social service. This is preceded by a brief study in the nature and meaning of the Church; and followed by an inevitably somewhat disappointing discussion of "where do we go from here?" with emphasis upon small groups with mutual responsibility and a common policy in the expenditure of income.

This, however, is certainly one of the places to start, especially in a society which spends as much on minor vices and relatively as little upon good works as ours. Moreover, the book does not suggest that this is all we need to attain salvation: and it effectively focuses attention on the crucial problem: that in the most typical areas of our society, the Christian faith has found no way of expressing itself meaningfully.

There is probably not much here for the experts in *The Frontier's* range of concerns. (But it may be suggested that some scholar should do in detail and at length the historical survey of the patterns of the Church's life which is here rapidly sketched. Whoever does so will deserve well of us all.) For the rest of us, there is a very great deal; and it is to be hoped that the book will be widely read by the worried man in the pew. The address of the Iona Community Publishing Department is 214 Clyde Street, Glasgow, C. 1.

DAVID M. PATON.

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